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The Comfortable Fallacy of Moral Binaries

Are you fucking kidding me?

This quote is taken directly from the YouTube transcript, and I'm not going to link the BookTuber because they don't deserve the click throughs. But my god, *what the fuck*.

> What is a major pet peeve of yours in books today? And I'll go first.
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> My biggest pet peeve has been this rising disturbing trend of what I like to call Nazis are people too sympathy trope. This is a trope that has been explored in books like *Powerless* even *Fourth Wing*.

> And this book is no exception to that trope/trap And I was honestly very surprised by how much this trend is taking off especially in today's political climate and with our knowledge of fascism and the Nazi regime.
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> And I found it to be incredibly disturbing and also perplexing to see all of these authors humanizing and sympathizing with the Nazi regime or the fascists way more than the victims of genocide And this new trend is really a huge headscratcher because don't get me wrong I do love a good redemption arc. I love seeing a character develop over time realizing that they were in the wrong and make the leaps and bounds and whatever necessary steps they need to make in order to rectify all of their past misdeeds.

Someone, please, keep this BookTuber away from the history and historical fiction sections, because they'd explode like a vampire in sunlight if they had to deal with, y'know, authors who treat the past with *nuance*.

This kind of binary attitude is a betrayal of what good historical fiction (hell, literature in general) does. The point of good historical fiction is not to make readers empathize with people who do terrible things, but to place them in *context*. The point is *not* to exonerate evil but to portray the evil enacted by humans, and not in a cartoon, mustache-twirling way.

God forbid this BookTuber reads something like *The Kindly Ones* and comes away thinking that people will be turned into Nazis for reading it. Or that real-life Nazis did objectively heroic things, like John Rabe, who was ostracized by the Nazi party for helping to save thousands of Chinese lives during the brutal occupation of Nanking by the Japanese.

I'm currently outlining a project on the Second Siege of Zaragoza. Marshal Jean Lannes dies before he gets any sort of redemption arc. He hates what he has to do at Zaragoza. He does it any way, and it kills his soul. He's dead. He *can't* change. To force him into any sort of redemption arc would be historiographical malpractice and a falsification of known historical facts.

I mean, I write about Napoleon Bonaparte. Does that make me empathize with all of his actions? Oh hell no. I know him too well to do that.

The BookTuber also says they like redemption arcs, but in the same breath says fascists deserve no redemption arcs. Pick a fucking lane.

I once got downvoted to hell on Reddit for daring to bring up historical nuance. The discussion was about RPF (real people fiction) and someone declared, "I'm okay with RPF as long as there's no real children involved." Of course, I had to ask, "Alright, what about historical RPF and my main character is Margaret Beaufort. You know, married to a man more than twice her twelve years-of -age, had a baby at thirteen?"

To understand history, one has to understand that it is not pretty, it is not nostalgic. Shitty things happened to people, people did shitty things, and sometimes there were children involved.

Am I comfortable with everything in history? Fuck no. But history doesn't care if anyone is comfortable. It is what it is and that's what happened.

Digressing just a bit (but it will make sense), the History RPF tag on AO3 is wild. This is where you can find stories like Friedrich Engels having Karl Marx's baby. No, there was no dialectical or political allegory involved. It was just 6,000 words of Engels having Marx's baby.

This also where you can find the best historical isekai fic of all time (at least in my opinion it is). What's isekai? Isekai is a Japanese term for when a normal person gets transported to a new world, usually LitRPG-ish in nature. Like *Alice in Wonderland*. But this one is His Soul is Marching On to Another World; or, the John Brown Isekai by CabbagePreacher. Yes, *that* John Brown, the fire-and-brimstone American abolitionist ... who gets transported to a LitRPG isekai world that happens to have slavery in it. *And it works.* Chaos ensues.

Am I comfortable with everything that goes on in the AO3 History RPF tag? No. But I choose to write and let write. Does it make me uncomfortable that people write Columbine school shooter fic? Well, as much as I hate it, Klebold and Harris qualify as historical figures regardless of if I personally agree with it or not.

I don't understand the Russian Revolution RPF corner and Vladimir Lenin/Leon Trotsky shippers. They probably don't understand why I ship Napoleon Bonaparte/Tsar Alexander I, so it's mutual.

(It's because it's fucking hilarious, that's why.)

If history makes you comfortable, it is not history. It is *propaganda*. And propaganda is what these moral binary puritans want.

I would argue that the BookTuber and other moral binary purists are the real fascists here. What is fascism if not a paranoid obsession with purity — of blood, of ideology, of belonging? Fascism demands a rigid binary: Us versus Them. The Good and the Evil. The Deserving and the Degenerate. An In-Group and an Out-Group. The moment someone demands absolute moral clarity and denies the messiness of context or individual humanity, they are walking the same path, even if they've dressed it in pastel Instagram infographics and #resistance hashtags.

Moral binaries are the security blanket of bad readers and lazy shorthand that pretends to be intellectual while lying to their audience.

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